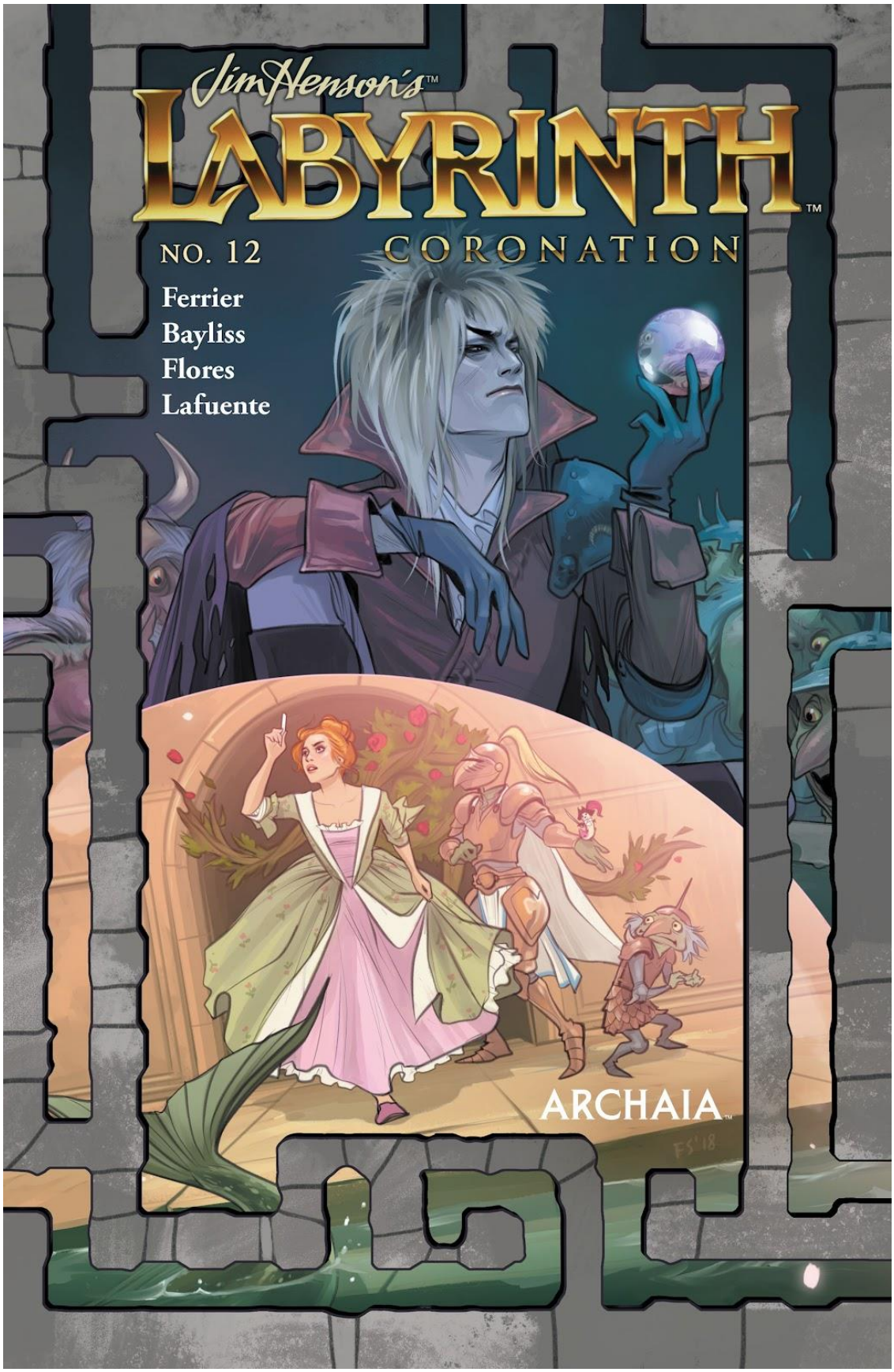
Jim Henson's™
LABYRINTH™
NO. 12
CORONATION
Ferrier
Bayliss
Flores
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ARCHAIA™

Jim Henson's LABYRINTH™ CORONATION

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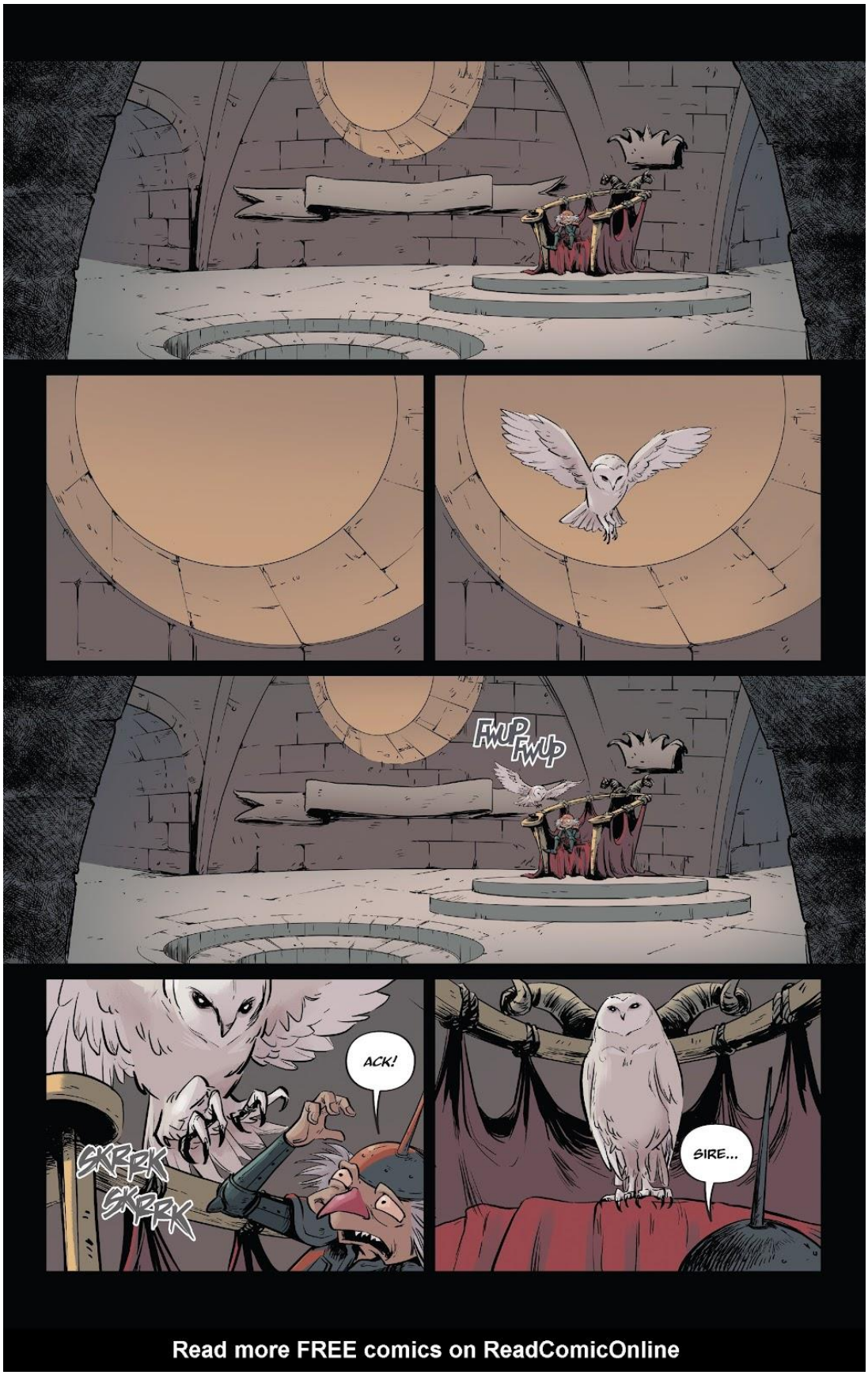

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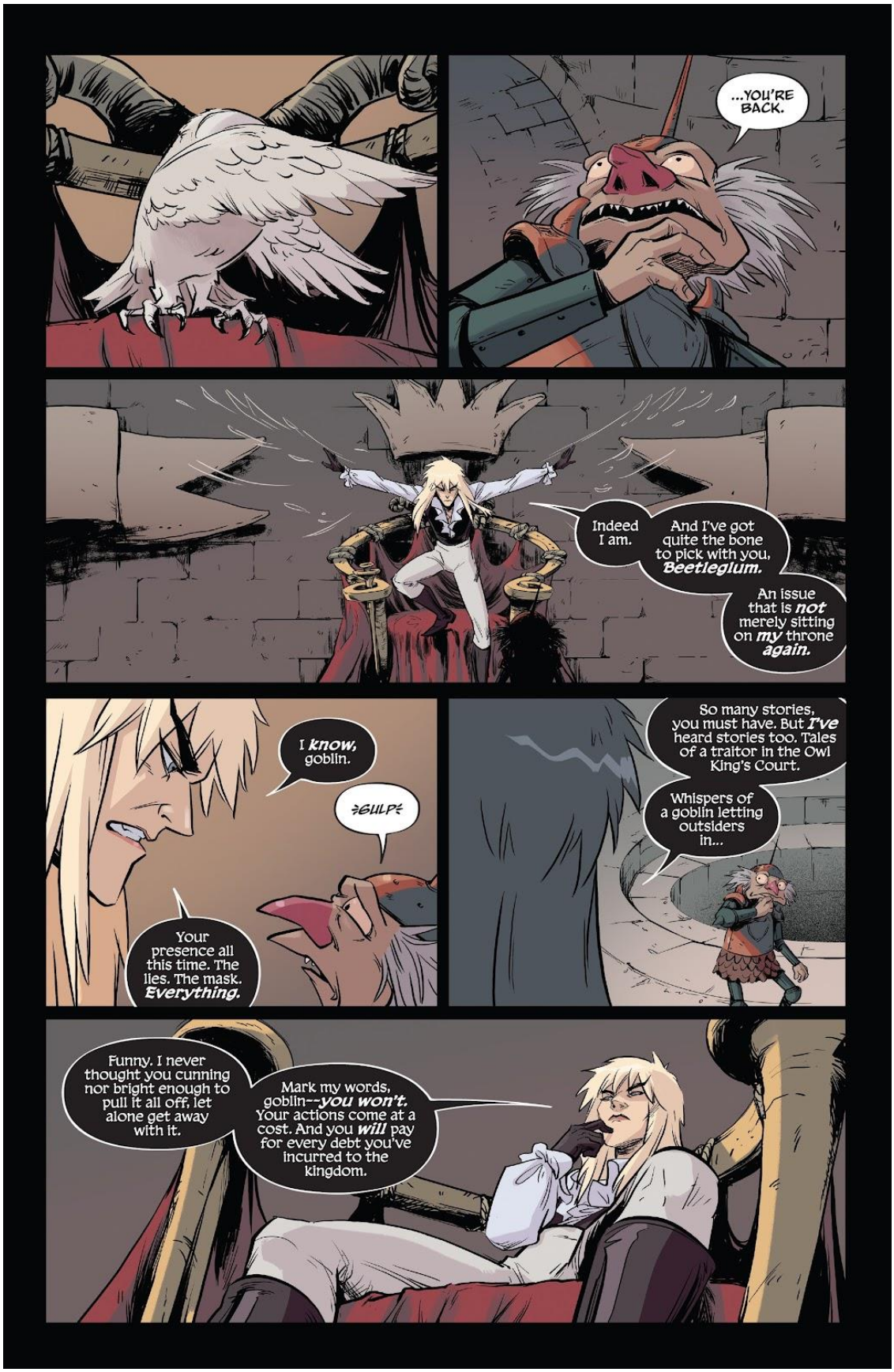
...YOU'RE BACK.
Indeed I am.
And I've got quite the bone to pick with you, Beetleglum.
An issue that is not merely sitting on my throne again.
I know, goblin.
>GULP<
Your presence all this time. The lies. The mask. Everything.
So many stories, you must have. But I've heard stories too. Tales of a traitor in the Owl King's Court.
Whispers of a goblin letting outsiders in...
Funny. I never thought you cunning nor bright enough to pull it all off, let alone get away with it.
Mark my words, goblin--you won't. Your actions come at a cost. And you will pay for every debt you've incurred to the kingdom.

If you're worried about banishment... you *should* be, naturally.
Though, a lifetime in the Bog of Eternal Stench is perhaps a punishment too lenient for high treason.
I-I KNOW, SIRE. I KNOW.
I CAN'T DENY ALL THAT I'VE DONE--ABOVE ALL, LOSING YOUR TRUST--AND ALL THAT I'VE *KNOWN* FOR THESE MANY YEARS.
Then why...
...why so insistent, all this time, that I tell you a story *YOU ALREADY KNEW?!*
I DON'T EXPECT YOU TO BELIEVE ME, SIRE. BUT MY CURIOSITY HAS ALWAYS BEEN JUST.
Pig-spittle. You lie.
NO. ONE THING I NEVER FOUND OUT WAS HOW IT ENDED...
...FOR THE WOMAN WITH THE UNVANQUISHED HEART.
That story, like this one unfolding now, ends the way they all do in the Labyrinth...

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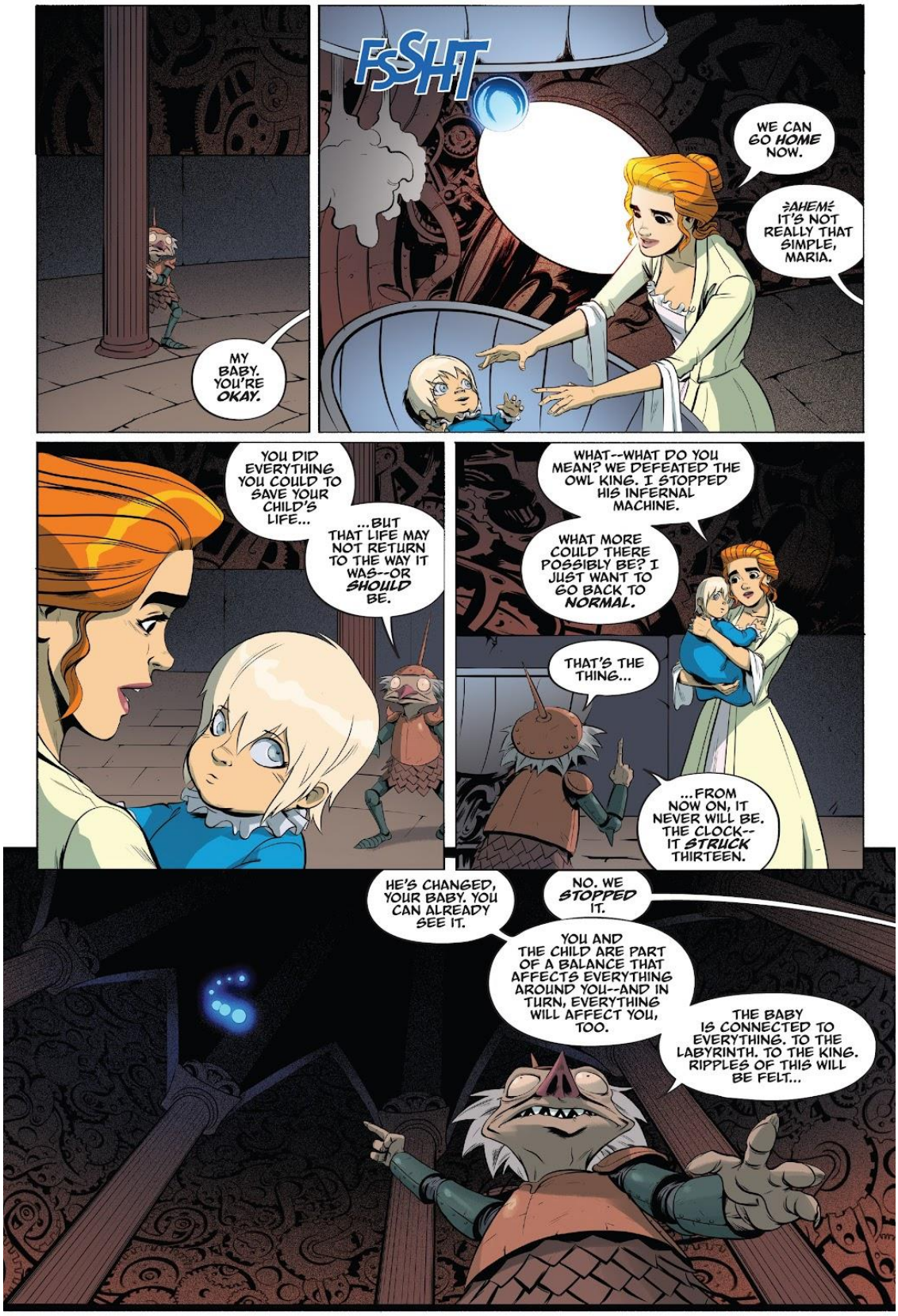
"...in tears."
HOLD STILL, FLESH BAG! THE PORTAL HUNGERS FOR YOU.
≥HNNG≤ NO!
YES. YESSS. I CAN FEEL IT NOW, MY CHILD.
YOUR TIME... BECOMING MINE.
The chalk...
KRIK
...its power...
...CAME FROM ME!
SHWIK
NNGGRRAAH!

MY BABY...
FWISH
NO-- WHAT ARE YOU--
I DON'T KNOW HOW TO STOP YOUR EVIL ORB...
FWISH
...BUT I CAN RE-SHAPE IT.

NNNRRRAARRGH!
GWWWAAAH!

METHINKS THE BEAST DOTH QUIVER. YOUR TIME IS NIGH, BRUTE!
THE BIG ONES ALWAYS MAKE THE LOUDEST BANG, SO'S THEY DO.
YOUR ARROGANCE AMUSES ME. IT WILL ALSO FILL MY GULLET WITH YOUR BONES.
'AT'S IT THEN, SIR SKUBBIN--READY, AIM, AND FIRE WHEN READY!
I most surely do NOT want to hug you!
FWOOSH
BUZZZ
BUZZZ
BUZZZ
NNNGRRARRH!
THAK
BONK
THAK
THAK
NNNOOOOOO!

≥HNNG≤
≥NGUH≤
≥HURRR≤
BPOOF
≥A-HAK≤

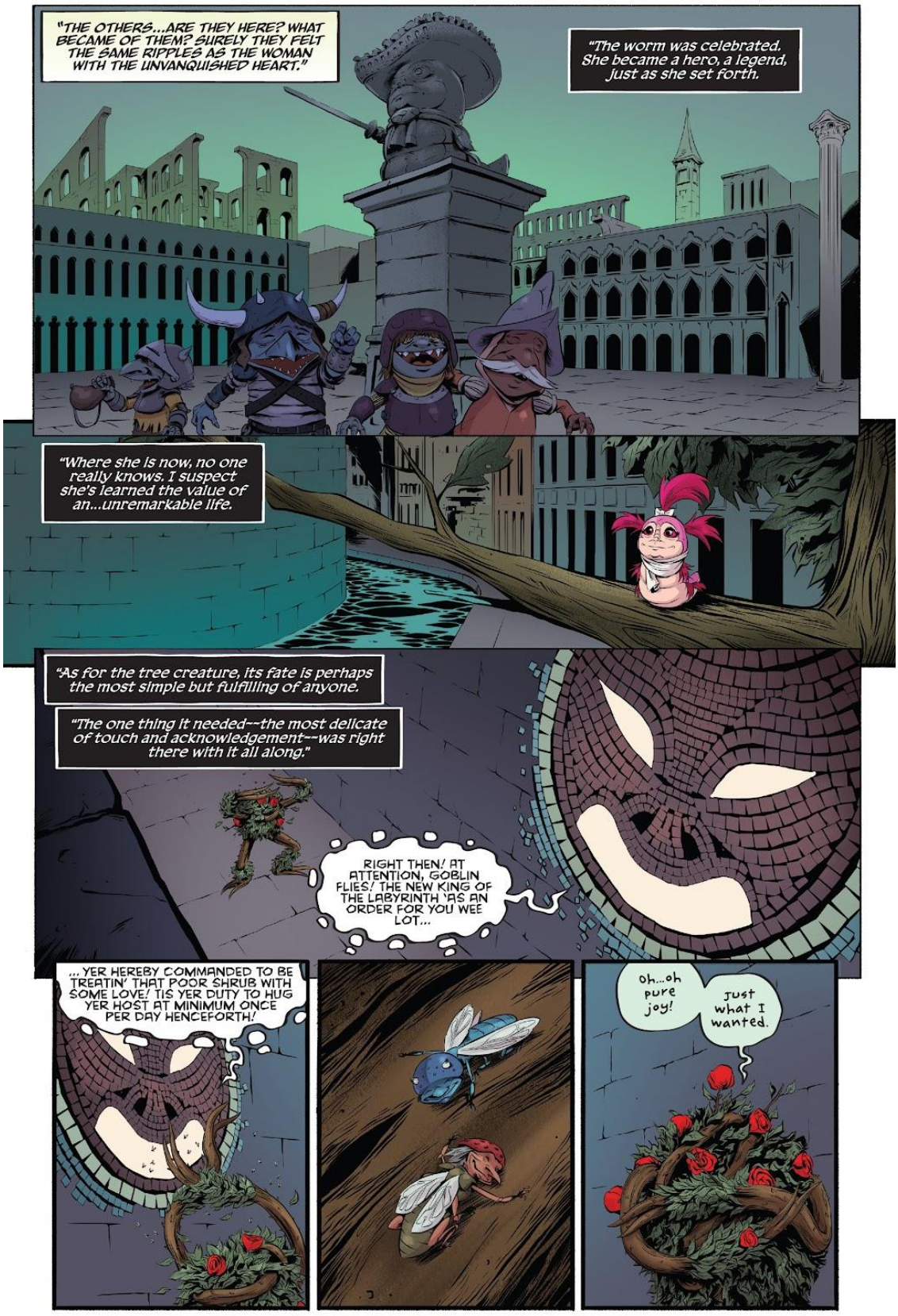

MY BABY. YOU'RE OKAY.
FSSHT
WE CAN GO HOME NOW.
AHEM IT'S NOT REALLY THAT SIMPLE, MARIA.
YOU DID EVERYTHING YOU COULD TO SAVE YOUR CHILD'S LIFE...
...BUT THAT LIFE MAY NOT RETURN TO THE WAY IT WAS--OR SHOULD BE.
WHAT--WHAT DO YOU MEAN? WE DEFEATED THE OWL KING. I STOPPED HIS INFERNAL MACHINE.
WHAT MORE COULD THERE POSSIBLY BE? I JUST WANT TO GO BACK TO NORMAL.
THAT'S THE THING...
...FROM NOW ON, IT NEVER WILL BE. THE CLOCK-- IT STRUCK THIRTEEN.
HE'S CHANGED, YOUR BABY. YOU CAN ALREADY SEE IT.
NO. WE STOPPED IT.
YOU AND THE CHILD ARE PART OF A BALANCE THAT AFFECTS EVERYTHING AROUND YOU--AND IN TURN, EVERYTHING WILL AFFECT YOU, TOO.
THE BABY IS CONNECTED TO EVERYTHING. TO THE LABYRINTH. TO THE KING. RIPPLES OF THIS WILL BE FELT...

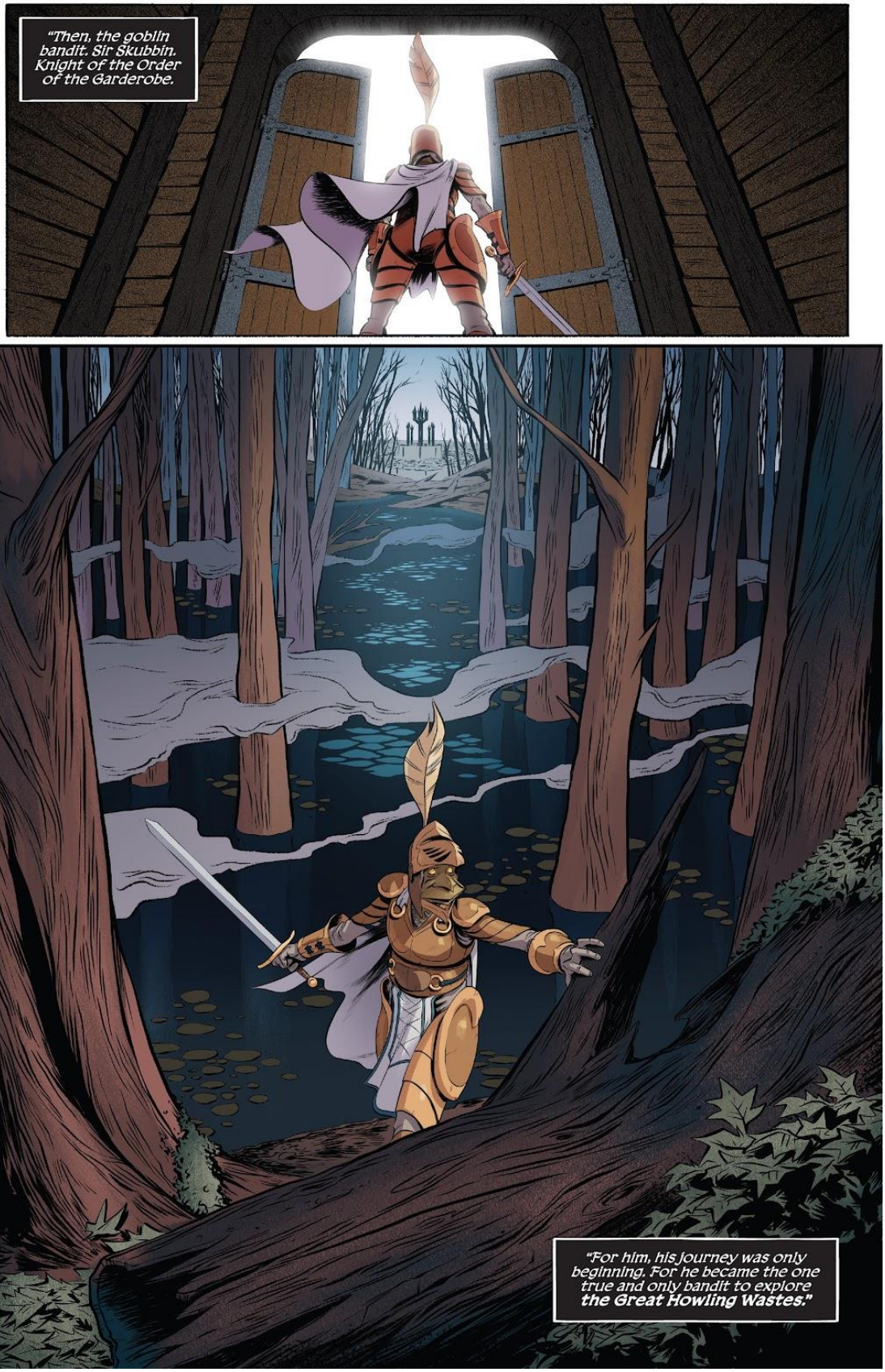
THE OUTCOMES-- MAYBE POSSIBLE, MAYBE CERTAIN-- SHOULD YOU RETURN TO IT.
THE BOY'S FATHER, DEAD. A LIFE OF MISFORTUNE.
...IN YOUR WORLD.
I...I LOST.

THE KING WAS RIGHT, THEN. I WAS TOO LATE.
BUT... A VANQUISHED SOUL DOESN'T MEAN A VANQUISHED HEART.
SIR SKUBBIN. CIBLE. TANGLE.
YOU'VE ALL RISKED YOUR LIVES TO HELP ME. I COULDN'T HAVE ASKED FOR GREATER COMPANIONS THROUGH THIS.
THANK YOU.
FOR EVERYTHING.
MARIA? WHERE ARE YOU GO--STOP RIGHT THERE. P-PLEASE DON'T LEAVE.
OI! HOLD ON NOW, LOVE!

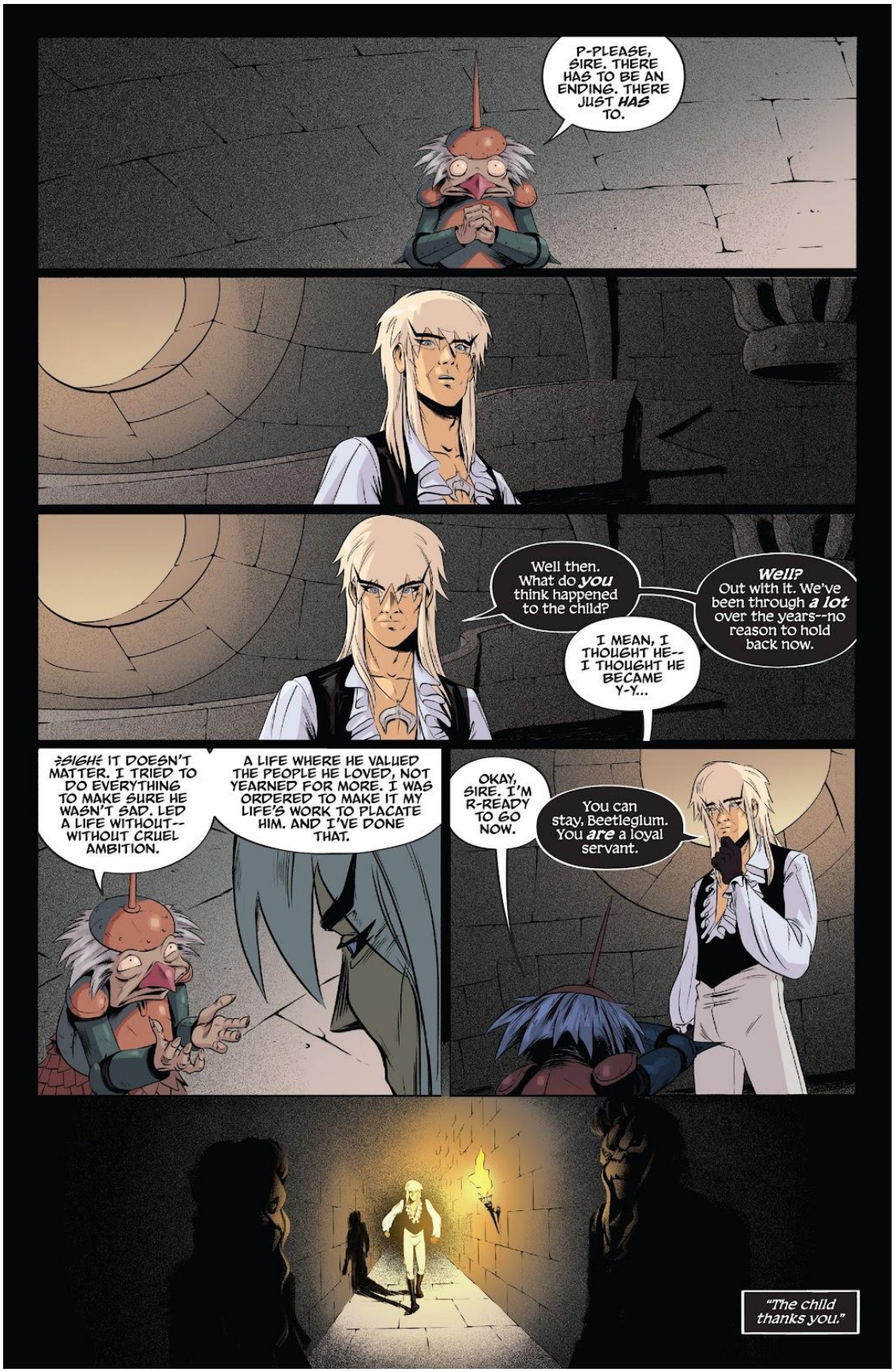
GOOD--

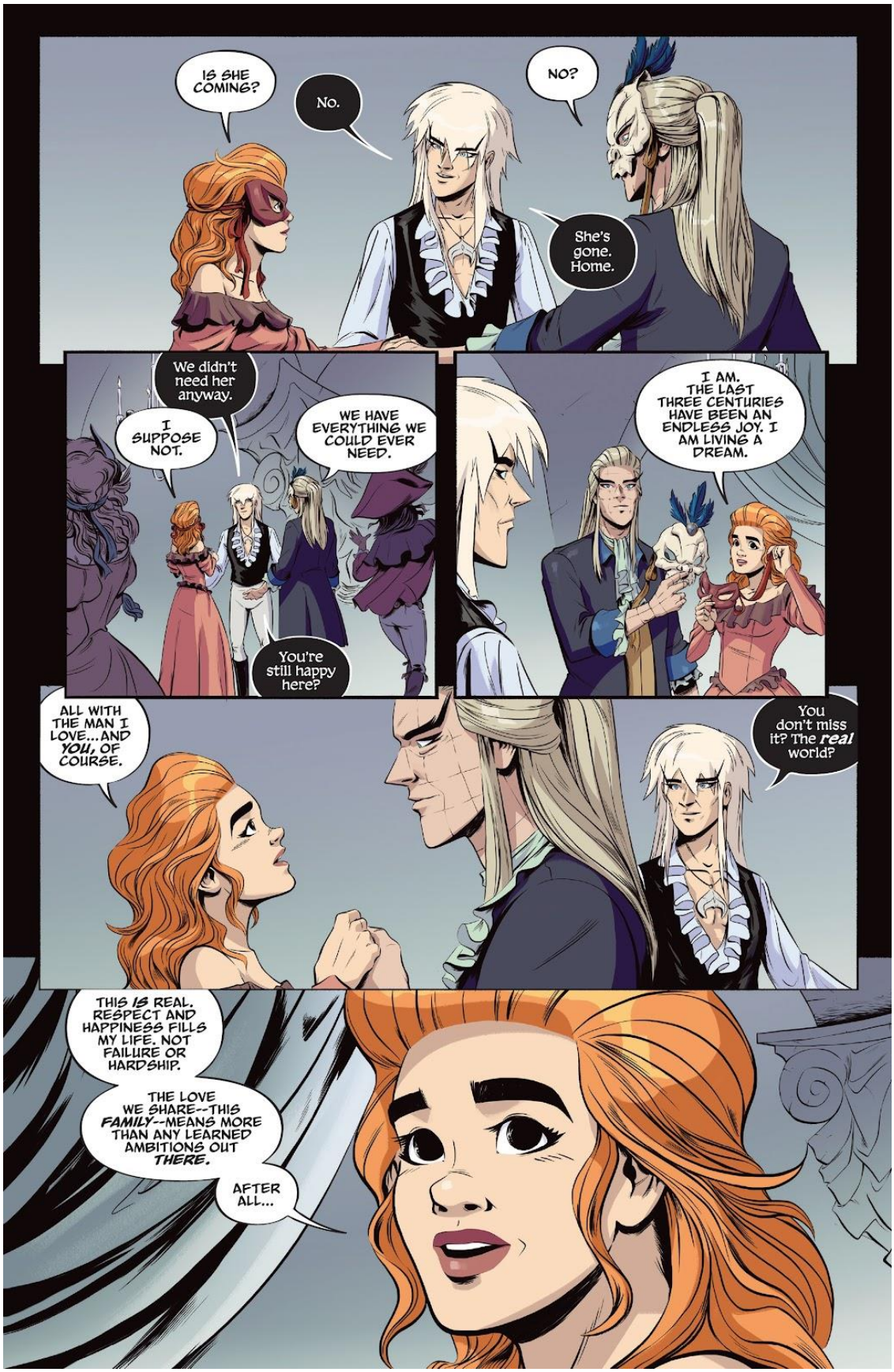
"~~bye."
There. Happy now, goblin? Your precious tale has an ending.
Now, onto the matter of your punishment.
YES. I RECALL NOW, SIRE. THE WOMAN WITH THE UNVANQUISHED-- SHE ENTERED HIS MACHINE...
BUT THERE WAS A CRASH! A CLANG?
NO, A CLATTER! A TERRIBLE, SPECTACULAR CLATTER!
Yes. But even more than that...
=HUURK=
...the Labyrinth...
...it changed.
ACK! SIRE, PLEASE! SEND ME TO THE BOG, BUT DON'T DROP ME!
=OOF=
Everything fell into place as it should. Or shouldn't? There is no right or wrong in my Labyrinth.

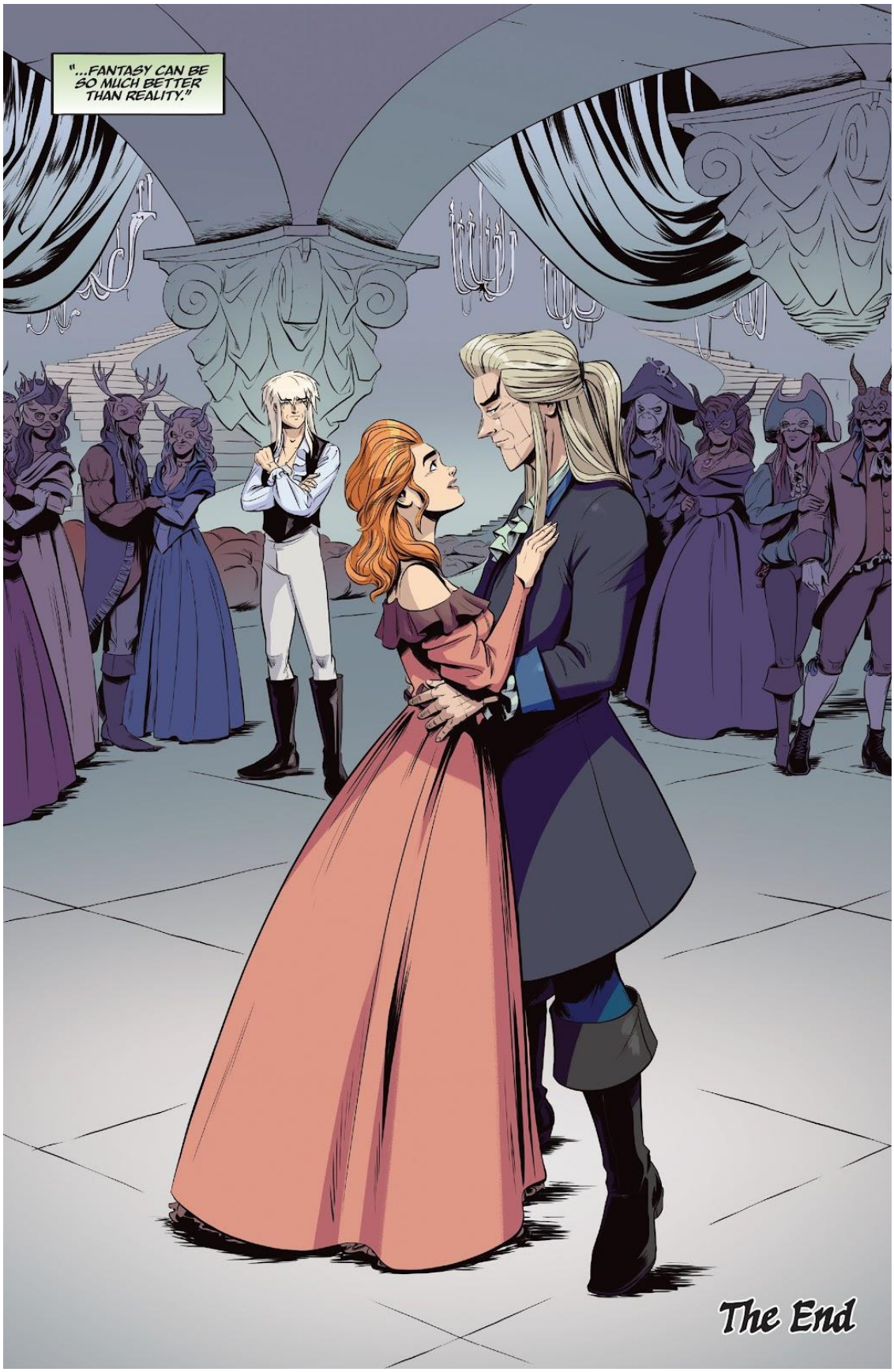

"THE OTHERS...ARE THEY HERE? WHAT BECAME OF THEM? SURELY THEY FELT THE SAME RIPPLES AS THE WOMAN WITH THE UNVANQUISHED HEART."
"The worm was celebrated. She became a hero, a legend, just as she set forth.
"Where she is now, no one really knows. I suspect she's learned the value of an...unremarkable life.
"As for the tree creature, its fate is perhaps the most simple but fulfilling of anyone.
"The one thing it needed--the most delicate of touch and acknowledgement--was right there with it all along."
RIGHT THEN! AT ATTENTION, GOBLIN FLIES! THE NEW KING OF THE LABYRINTH 'AS AN ORDER FOR YOU WEE LOT...
... YER HEREBY COMMANDED TO BE TREATIN' THAT POOR SHRUB WITH SOME LOVE! TIS YER DUTY TO HUG YER HOST AT MINIMUM ONCE PER DAY HENCEFORTH!
Oh...oh pure joy!
Just what I wanted.


"Then, the goblin bandit, Sir Skubbin, Knight of the Order of the Garderobe,
"For him, his journey was only beginning. For he became the one true and only bandit to explore the Great Howling Wastes."

B-BUT WHAT OF MARIA? THE BABY? WHAT OF...YOU?
YOU DID ARRIVE RATHER SOON AFTER. FULLY FORMED. READY TO RULE...
hmm
A true mind-bender, is it not?
But, is it that simple? If the meaning has already floated to the surface, why focus on details?
Better yet, why restrict oneself to a single tawdry ending?
The suspense--it kills you, doesn't it?
SIRE, PLEASE. I MUST KNOW!
Maybe, I am the Owl King--possessed in this body.
Maybe Maria used the last little itty bitty bit of her special chalk to draw me.
Maybe Hoggle is the baby, worn and weathered by a lifetime of this kingdom.
Maybe I am the Labyrinth itself, stitched together, manifested from bits and pieces of its own living memory.
Maybe the baby went home. Nothing happened. It grew up dreadfully boring. And no one will ever know.


P-PLEASE, SIRE. THERE HAS TO BE AN ENDING. THERE JUST *HAS* TO.
Well then. What do *you* think happened to the child?
Well? Out with it. We've been through *a lot* over the years--no reason to hold back now.
I MEAN, I THOUGHT HE-- I THOUGHT HE BECAME Y-Y...
>SIGH< IT DOESN'T MATTER. I TRIED TO DO EVERYTHING TO MAKE SURE HE WASN'T SAD. LED A LIFE WITHOUT-- WITHOUT CRUEL AMBITION.
A LIFE WHERE HE VALUED THE PEOPLE HE LOVED, NOT YEARNED FOR MORE. I WAS ORDERED TO MAKE IT MY LIFE'S WORK TO PLACATE HIM. AND I'VE DONE THAT.
OKAY, SIRE. I'M R-READY TO GO NOW.
You can stay, Beetleglum. You *are* a loyal servant.
"The child thanks you."


IS SHE COMING?
No.
NO?
She's gone. Home.
We didn't need her anyway.
I SUPPOSE NOT.
WE HAVE EVERYTHING WE COULD EVER NEED.
You're still happy here?
I AM. THE LAST THREE CENTURIES HAVE BEEN AN ENDLESS JOY. I AM LIVING A DREAM.
ALL WITH THE MAN I LOVE...AND YOU, OF COURSE.
You don't miss it? The real world?
THIS IS REAL. RESPECT AND HAPPINESS FILLS MY LIFE. NOT FAILURE OR HARDSHIP.
THE LOVE WE SHARE--THIS FAMILY--MEANS MORE THAN ANY LEARNED AMBITIONS OUT THERE.
AFTER ALL...


"...FANTASY CAN BE SO MUCH BETTER THAN REALITY."
The End